Red Line/Blue Line Connector Project
Working Group Meeting #1

LOCATION OF MEETING: Saltonstall Building, 100 Cambridge St., Boston

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: March 24, 2009, 4-6:00 pm

Working Group Members:
Noah Chesnin, Conservation Law Foundation (alternate)
Conrad Crawford, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Robert D'Amico, Boston Transportation Department
Christopher Hart, Institute for Human Centered Design
David Loutzenheiser, Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC)
John Messervy, Massachusetts General Hospital
Thomas Nally, A Better City
Bob O'Brien, Downtown North Association
Ellen Rooney, Beacon Hill Business Association
Jeff Rosenblum, City of Cambridge
Laura Sargent, Office of Martha Walz, Beacon Hill Representative (alternate)
Leah Walczak, Historic New England

Public:
Jeb Bobseine, Boston Courant

Staff:
Kate Fichter, Executive Office of Transportation (EOT)
Scott Hamwey, EOT

Mark Ennis, STV
Kristine Gorman, STV
Mark Pelletier, STV
Kristine Wickham, VHB
Thomas Arm, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)
Nancy Farrell, RVA

PURPOSE/SUBJECT: The first of several working group meetings concerning the connection of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Red Line and Blue Line at the Charles/MGH Station and the relocation or closure of Bowdoin Station. This meeting served as an overall introduction of the initial project plans and goals to the working group.

Introduction and Initial Comments

Nancy Farrell, Manager of Public Involvement from Regina Villa Associates, opened the meeting and asked the participants to introduce themselves (see the attendance list). Ms. Farrell said that the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) asked her to facilitate the meetings. The members received a set of Working Group Guidelines and Procedures before the meeting. Ms. Farrell listed the key elements of the guidelines: facilitation to achieve consensus, where possible; time for public comment at the end of the meeting; the role of members in bringing information back to their groups and commenting on proposals and EOT's commitment to providing timely and understandable information; consistent attendance at and participation in meetings; respect for

opinions of others; and limiting comments to the topics of the meetings. The guidelines were accepted by the working group members as presented.

Ms. Farrell said there will be a website for this project so that information can be more easily exchanged electronically. The site is not live yet, but EOT anticipates it will be www.eot.state.ma.us/redblue. The site will include background project materials as well as presentation materials from the Working Group meetings. The Working Group members will be informed when the site is live.

When EOT has had responses from all of the groups invited to participate in the Working Group, Ms. Farrell will provide a contact list to the members.

Bob O'Brien, Downtown North Association, said he appreciated receiving the project guidelines and information in advance of the meeting and found them to be professional and useful.

Project Introduction

Kate Fichter, EOT Program Manager, said that the project has a fairly long history. It was granted a Certificate from the Secretary of Environmental Affairs in November 2007. The Commonwealth has a legal commitment to complete environmental review and design of the project by December 31, 2011. Ms. Fichter and Scott Hamwey are the day-to-day project managers designated by EOT.

Project Outline

Mark Pelletier, Project Manager for STV, the consultants, outlined the project using a PowerPoint presentation. The STV scope of work is to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on connecting the Blue Line and Red Line at Charles/MGH Station and the relocation or closure of Bowdoin Station. There is also a No Build option. Ms. Fichter pointed out that the Red Line/Blue Line Connector project is happening in conjunction with the Government Center renovation and that some of the components from each of the projects will interact.

Mr. Pelletier outlined the project area: Cambridge Street between the Charles/MGH Red Line Station and Government Center Station. He showed the current location of Bowdoin Station and the turnaround loop used to reverse the trains. Mr. Pelletier presented the project goals: to improve mobility and regional access for East Boston, the North Shore, Cambridge and northwestern suburbs; boost transit ridership; reduce automobile travel through downtown; improve air quality; and reduce congestion in the downtown transfer stations. STV will be developing a baseline corridor study, developing and refining alternatives, evaluating impacts and potential mitigation measures and producing a streamlined DEIR. The impact assessment will include noise and vibration, historic/archeological elements, groundwater impacts, parklands, construction period, ridership, traffic, operations, land takings and air quality. Kristine Wickham, Project Manager from VHB, noted that the DEIR will be thorough and detailed, responding to the issues in the Secretary's scope of work, and all of the comments, with the hope of filing a single document to be accepted by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs.

Mr. Pelletier outlined the milestone schedule for the project. Alternatives refinement and conceptual engineering will be underway from March to September 2009. There will be a design report submitted in September, with the Alternatives Analysis completed between October and December 2009. A draft of the DEIR will be available in February 2010 for review in advance of

the filing in April 2010. A public hearing on the DEIR is scheduled for May 2010, with a Certificate expected in 2010.

Project Approaches

Mark Ennis, STV, walked the group through the track diagrams and the initial options for the project. In summary, there are two general construction options: cut and cover and/or mined construction.

The first option is a cut and cover method in which slurry walls are constructed on the edges of Cambridge Street, the surface is removed and steel plates installed on the street to permit work to continue beneath the street. This option would allow two side tracks underneath Cambridge Street and would allow for the storage of five trains. The MBTA would like to have the ability to store five trains in this area but is considering reducing the number of trains that are needed to be stored in this area. STV is trying to find ways to minimize the tunnel width and street impact associated with this method. This approach has dramatic impacts on Cambridge Street, but it would be cheaper than other options.

The second option Mr. Ennis presented was a part cut and cover, part mined tunnel approach. The mined tunnel approach would feature a vertical shaft cut into Cambridge Street, and would allow construction to occur underground without digging up the street. This approach would help minimize the interference with traffic and the ground level in general. The downside to this approach is that it is likely to be more expensive and there could be an issue with pedestrians having to navigate different elevations within the station once completed.

Mr. O'Brien noted that a cut and cover operation would be "unthinkable" to the community, which has suffered through years of delayed reconstruction. While the mined tunnel approach might appear more costly, it would probably be less expensive in many ways – including quality of life – for the community than the cut and cover approach. Mr. O'Brien said he was happy to serve as the canary in the coal mine on this issue, noting that the community will not want to see Cambridge Street torn up again. John Messervy, Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), pointed out that the cost should not hold up the Red Line/Blue Line project since it offers significant benefits to many communities. David Loutzenheiser, MAPC, brought up the idea of a moving walkway between the two stations and inquired as to how much more expensive the mined approach is than the cut and cover approach. Ms. Fichter said that EOT is under a legal obligation to study a rail system between the two stations. Mr. Ennis said that he did not feel comfortable with putting a cost on the options now because there are too many unknowns at this point in the investigation. Conrad Crawford, DCR, asked about the steps being taken to preserve any archeological findings. Mr. Pelletier replied that the Public Archaeology Lab (PAL) is on STV's team to assess the archeological issues. Mr. Messervy said when MGH was constructing the Yawkey building, the findings indicated that there was a dump on the site (from the old edge of the river up to Blossom Street).

Mr. Messervy asked how much of the project will absolutely have to be done with a cut and cover approach; Mr. Ennis said that STV will not know until more of the project details are determined. Part of the decision would depend on the depth of the track elevation. Mr. Ennis proceeded to explain that this approach will have train storage at the MGH stop in tail tracks that go beyond the station. Mr. Messervy asked whether excavate could be brought out via the existing Blue Line and both EOT and STV said that they would explore this option; otherwise, the current intent would be to construct a shaft at Blossom Street.

Mr. Ennis addressed the issues relating to Bowdoin Station. If the station is eliminated, west bound trains would bypass the existing Bowdoin loop and connect on a relatively straight line down Cambridge Street to the Charles/MGH Station. This option would eliminate the need for the loop at Bowdoin Station for westbound trains to turn around, so the loop could be used for storage. The MBTA Operations staff feels that the loop should not be used to transport passengers because there is a concern about the ability to evacuate disabled passengers from a train in that area.

Mr. O'Brien raised the issue of the status of the design of the Government Center Station. He said that EOT and the MBTA have to consider the interaction between the Government center renovation and the Red Line/Blue Line Connector. Ms. Fichter said the original design for the Government Center project was rejected when the construction bids came in well over budget. Ms. Fichter said her current understanding is that the MBTA anticipates the western exit, closest to Bowdoin Station, will be used only for egress. There was a discussion among the members on the wisdom of this approach. Mr. O'Brien said the MBTA typically says that Bowdoin Station has low ridership, but the hours of use are limited, so that's a circular argument. Christopher Hart, Institute for Human Centered Design, said that there are now a lot more people living in the area and transit use is less 9 to 5 dependent than it once was. In light of these changes, limited access to a station or stations in the area makes no sense. There should be strong coordination between these projects to avoid making short-sighted decisions. EOT should be talking with City Hall and the Boston Redevelopment Authority to ensure good transportation planning. Mr. O'Brien said that the western Government Center exit could be considered a subset of the proposal to close Bowdoin Station. The project should not be using historic Bowdoin ridership figures since they are no longer accurate.

Mr. Ennis then outlined the approach to relocation/modification of the Bowdoin station. This option would feature a center platform and the path to the ground level would depend on the rail depth. Alternatively, the platform would be shifted more toward the loop at Bowdoin Station and would go outside the right of way of Cambridge Street.

Mr. Ennis showed the group slides depicting possible slurry wall construction near Lindall Place. The cross-section shows some of the challenges of this work, including the presence of many utilities and the foundations of the adjacent buildings and Charles/MGH Station. Another slide depicted sheetpile/soldier pile wall tunnel construction near Blossom Street. This would be a four-track configuration. Mr. Ennis also showed a mined tunnel section.

Mr. Ennis said it is unlikely the job would be done with a tunnel boring machine given the cost of purchasing such a machine for a short bore, or mining section. Construction of two side-by-side shafts is an option.

Ms. Farrell presented the public outreach schedule. There will be six Working Group meetings with two public meetings at key milestones (Alternatives Analysis and DEIR). The team will meet with abutters and neighborhood groups and welcomes requests for those briefings. There will be a project website and fact sheet.

Mr. Loutzenheiser expressed interest for a future presentation on how the project would be funded, which Ms. Fichter agreed will be done when the information is available.

There was also a question of whether the Green and Blue Line extensions would interact with the current project. Ms. Fichter said that those projects did not affect the current project all that much except for increased ridership, which their models took into account. The Central Transportation

Planning Staff (CTPS) is just beginning work on the Red Line/Blue Line modeling, and that information will be shared with the Working Group. Ms. Fichter noted that the model CTPS uses was updated for the Urban Ring project and is based on updated land use assumptions from MAPC's Metro Futures model.

Mr. Messervy asked for a list of the team members. Mr. Pelletier identified each of the firms on the project team and their respective responsibilities..

Ms. Fichter thanked the Working Group members for their participation. She noted that these kinds of transit projects involve tradeoffs and balancing goals and resources and she looks forward to a positive dialogue on the project.

Public Comments

Ms. Farrell asked for public comments. There were no public comments at this time.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Working Group will be scheduled in May.

EOT Contract No.: STV_REDBLU
STV Contract No.: 40-14212
Meeting Minutes Prepared by: Nancy Farrell, RVA